

Clavering harshly. "If I sell to Mr. Johnson we occupy the lodge."

"But the lack of dignity," urged agent.

"It is the lodge or nothing," answered the old man.

"Well, I agree then," Johnson said heartily. "And I hope that—"

"Mr. Johnson will find the castle vacated this day next month," interposed the old man. "And now, if you are ready with the lease, sir?"

He turned to the agent with a finality in his manner which prevented further argument.

One month later Johnson came into possession of the castle. His father's acquired wealth enabled him to supply a staff of servants and to keep up his position as the new lord of the estate. And it was a singularly lonely life that unveiled itself before him.

To begin with, he discovered that the tenants regarded him as an interloper. He had not anticipated that. In his country when one bought an estate the good will of the neighbors went with it as a matter of course.

Then there was Lord Clavering at the gate. It galled the young man to see the farmer, who passed him with an uncomprehending stare, raise his cap to the gatekeeper. And Johnson began to understand something of the pride which permitted the old man to occupy that menial position rather than leave the place where he had been born.

Then there was the matter of the automobilists, cousins of Clavering, just returned from India, who drove up to the castle, heard Johnson's explanations with blank amazement, and immediately went to the lodge, where they spent a festive afternoon. Johnson heard their ringing laughter as he sat moodily upon the balcony a boycotted man.

One thing alone kept him from throwing up the castle in disgust, and that was Lady Elinor. He had known from his first sight of her that he loved her. When he passed her,

he riding and she walking, his lifted hat produced only the coldest sign of recognition.

It was not in his nature to give up. But his invitations were declined with scant ceremony, his overtures frigidly denied. And, like Mordecai at the gate of the Persian king, Lord Clavering sat before the porter's lodge, his daughter by his side, while Johnson chafed and fumed impotently within the castle.

At last he sent for Mr. Jones and announced his decision to sell the place. The agent listened blandly.

"I can't say I'm greatly surprised, Mr. Johnson," he said. "It was not a wise business investment. However, I think I can get you a purchaser at a little less than the original price. Mr. Ballantyne has been sounding me—"

"My neighbor?"

"Yes, sir. If you have decided, I will let him know and you may come to terms about it."

Johnson heard rumors about Ballantyne. He had been reported engaged to Lady Elinor, but the match had been broken off a little while before. Johnson did not know the cause. But Ballantyne resolved to buy, and an immense burden was lifted from Johnson's heart.

He did not like Ballantyne. The man was a boor, a surly squireen of a type Johnson had believed long extinct. At their meeting he was more disdainful than Lord Clavering, and rude to the point of insolence. Johnson swallowed his pride. He only wanted to sell and get out of the country.

It was on the afternoon of the day when he had talked with Ballantyne that he was strolling down the lane leading from the village across the moors. Suddenly he heard the sound of a galloping horse. A moment later he saw Lady Elinor come flying toward him on horseback. The animal was evidently running away, and the girl was in momentary danger of falling.